

Sustainability, Diversification & Capacity Building



October 2024

A Playbook for Local First 5 Commissions

Developed
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For

First 5 California

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Purpose of This Document

The young children of California and their families have benefited from a variety of First 5-supported services for 25 years, since the passage of Proposition 10. The First 5 system is now at a critical juncture in its history as it reaches this important anniversary - with local commissions seeking ways to shore up budgets and continue serving their communities effectively in the face of declining revenues.

This Playbook is designed to share promising practices that local commissions have undertaken around the state, as well as newer and upcoming opportunities, with action steps to put these practices into play locally. Each section of the document will discuss a type of play, give concrete examples of how the play can benefit your commission and the communities you serve, and provide a practical planning guide with resources and key questions to get you started on a similar effort in your county.

We hope this practical Playbook helps stimulate discussion, excitement and - ultimately - drives changes and improvements across the state for our early childhood education system!

Overview: The Plays

This document provides a roadmap for new directions. Every idea listed in the playbook may not be right for your organization - but all of them can give you ideas to build on. The goal is to enable each local commission to take steps forward towards strategic planning, diversification of funding and services, and overall sustainability in a way that works for your team and community. Capacity building work may also be needed in order to take full advantage of these opportunities. Ideally, this document will spur discussions about how those efforts can be undertaken and supported in partnership at multiple levels.

Play #1	Play #2	Play #3
<p>Develop and Implement Sustainability Plans</p> <p>A key way to determine potential paths forward is through a formal effort to map out a local commission’s best strategic pathways towards long-term sustainability, working with commissioners, local partners, families who have benefited from the services provided by First 5 commissions, and other potential allies and thought partners. While there is no formal requirement for local commissions to adopt strategic sustainability plans, taking steps to develop, implement and monitor such plans is both timely and forward-thinking. Supporting grantees to plan for their own sustainability is also an important play.</p>	<p>Diversify Funding Streams</p> <p>Both governmental and community-based organizations have long sought to diversify their sources of revenue to guard against cyclical downturns and potential generational shifts of priority and focus over time. Some revenue streams can be sustained, while others may be one-time in nature or available over a limited period of time. Demonstrating successful outcomes during that time frame could lead to ongoing funding, however, so even a one-time allocation may be worth pursuing if it can be parlayed into ongoing funding in a future budget year.</p>	<p>Seize New Service Opportunities</p> <p>Being aware of new opportunities to either refinance existing services or shift services to fit funding availability is critical to developing a sustainable organization. Recent changes in long-standing programs such as Medicaid (known as Medi-Cal in California), Child Welfare Services and the Behavioral Health system present potential opportunities to leverage funding. In each case, these opportunities come with new organizational and operational requirements that will need thoughtful planning and execution.</p>

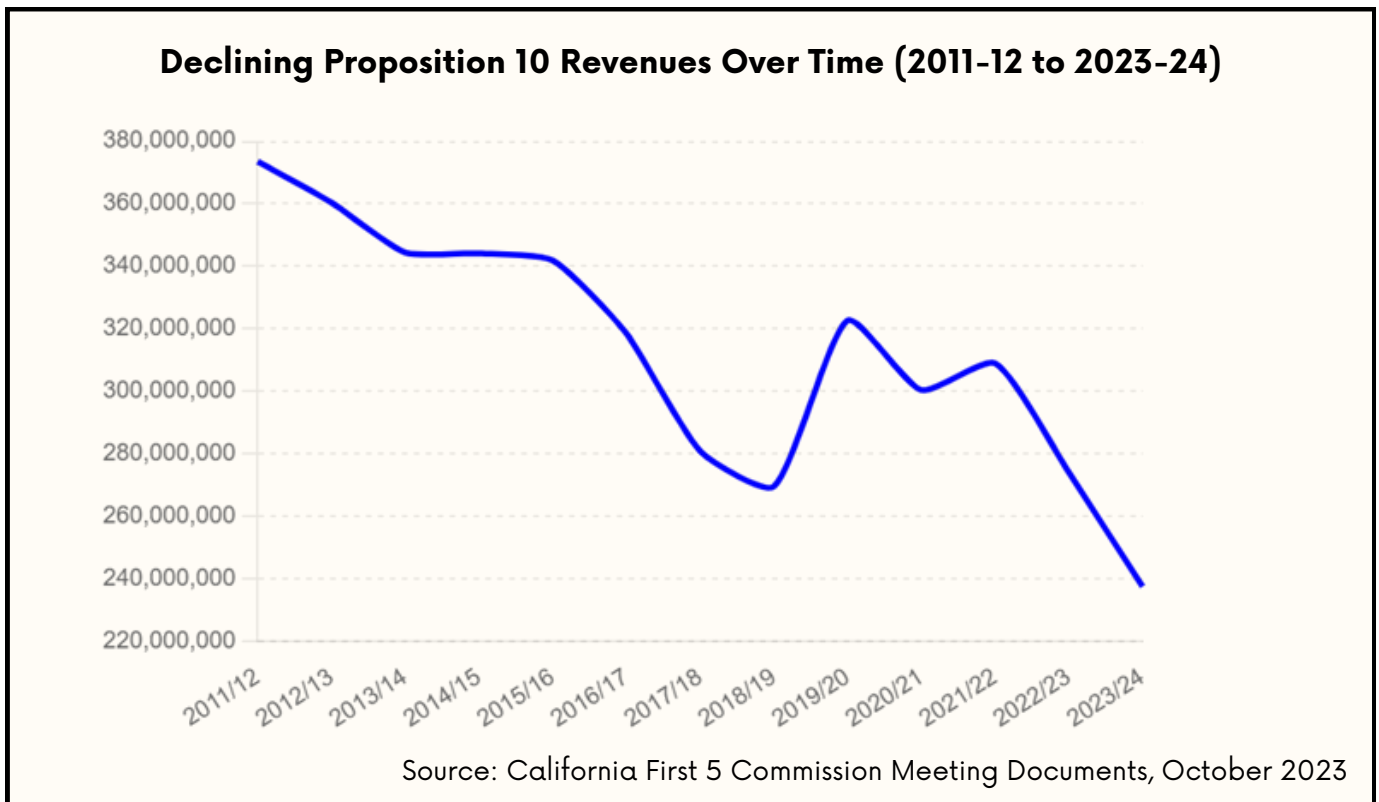
Background on Proposition 10

A Flexible but Declining Fund Source.

Proposition 10, enacted in California in 1998, created a tobacco tax aimed at funding early childhood development programs across the state. This measure added a 50-cent tax per pack of cigarettes and an equivalent tax on other tobacco products, creating a substantial revenue stream dedicated to supporting young children and their families.

The resources generated by this tax are divided between the California state commission (First 5 California) and the 58 county First 5 commissions. The allocation is structured as follows:

- 80% of the funds is distributed to the county First 5 commissions based on the number of live births in each county. This ensures that the majority of the funding directly supports local early childhood programs and services such as health supports, early learning, parent education, and family services, which are tailored to the specific needs of each community.
- 20% of the funds is allocated to the state commission, First 5 California. This portion is used for statewide initiatives, research, public education campaigns, and support for the county commissions. First 5 California aims to enhance the overall impact of early childhood programs across the state by providing resources, training, and advocacy efforts.



Unfortunately, the sustainability of these vital services faces challenges as tobacco consumption declines. While the decrease in smoking rates is a public health victory, it simultaneously reduces the revenue generated by the Proposition 10 tax.

This decline in funding poses a threat to the continuity and expansion of early childhood programs. As a result, First 5 agencies across California are exploring alternative funding sources and innovative strategies to maintain their crucial support for children and families, ensuring that the progress made over the past decades is not undermined by the diminishing tobacco tax revenue.

Why a Playbook?

A playbook-style report is an exceptionally practical tool, particularly in complex or dynamic environments where clear, actionable guidance is crucial. Unlike traditional reports, which often focus heavily on data analysis and theoretical insights, a Playbook is designed to provide a step-by-step guide to action, making it immediately useful to its readers.

- **Action-Oriented Structure:** The playbook format breaks down strategies and processes into clear, manageable steps. This action-oriented structure ensures that users can quickly grasp what needs to be done, how to do it, and when to do it, minimizing ambiguity and enabling rapid decision-making.
- **Consistent Execution:** By providing a standardized approach to tasks and challenges, a playbook helps ensure consistency across teams or departments. This uniformity is particularly valuable in organizations where different teams must coordinate closely, as it helps align efforts and reduces the risk of miscommunication or conflicting approaches.
- **Adaptability:** Playbooks can be easily updated to reflect new information, changing conditions, or evolving strategies. This flexibility makes them invaluable in fast-paced environments where quick pivots may be necessary.
- **Ease of Use and Accessibility:** The straightforward, often bullet-pointed format of a playbook makes it easy to use. Its accessibility ensures that even complex strategies or processes are broken down into understandable parts, making it easier for all team members, regardless of their experience level, to follow and implement the guidance provided.

In summary, a playbook-style report is not just a collection of best practices or guidelines but a dynamic, user-friendly tool that empowers organizations to execute strategies effectively, maintain consistency, and adapt to change. Its emphasis on clarity, actionability, and usability makes it an indispensable resource for any team or organization striving for operational excellence.

Play 1: Plan for Sustainability

With the projected continued decline in Proposition 10 tax revenues, local First 5 commissions are increasingly finding themselves at a turning point. Some have reduced services; others have taken steps to diversify their program offerings and revenue streams, some of which are presented in this document.

Changing program offerings and seeking new funding streams may both require capacity building efforts, depending on the size and expertise of existing staff and the availability of specialized service providers such as grant writers. Thinking upfront about the operational and programmatic impacts of potential pathways is even more critical when long-term revenue is uncertain and community well-being could be positively or negatively impacted by the choices that are made.

Play 1.1: Develop & Implement a Sustainability Plan

A key way to determine potential paths forward is through a formal effort to map out a local commission's best strategic pathways towards long-term sustainability, working with commissioners, local partners, families who have benefited from the services provided by First 5 commissions, and other potential allies and thought partners.

While there is no formal requirement for local commissions to adopt strategic sustainability plans, taking steps to develop, implement and monitor such plans is both timely and forward-thinking. Some have already done so, and their work could provide a road map for others who wish to do so as well.

Formal Sustainability Planning: How To Get Started

1. Set the Stage. Work with your local commission to develop basic information supporting the need for a sustainability plan. This stage may end with the commission adopting a resolution or otherwise directing staff to undertake a formal planning effort.

2. Create a Sustainability Steering Committee. The committee should review sustainability efforts that other commissions have undertaken to identify key components of the effort and potential sustainability pathways that could be relevant to the focal commission. Having a diverse and inclusive steering committee that represents a variety of key stakeholder voices is critical to success.

3. Brainstorm and Research. Gathering information about what potential changes, funding streams, programmatic and funding opportunities exist – and talking with experts in health, human services, early childhood education and other relevant fields about how those options could change over time is critical to developing a list of potential pathways for the organization.

4. Analyze, Analyze, Analyze. Map out the requirements, investments, time constraints, and overall pros/cons of various pathways that could be undertaken.

5. Talk to stakeholders who aren't a part of the steering committee. Find out what they most value from the organization today and what they would like to see it do in the future. Understanding the commission's value to the communities it serves is helpful to understanding what is important to keep and what might be less mission-critical if difficult decisions must be made.

6. Think about shorter- and longer-term options. Are there some ideas that could be undertaken and implemented more quickly than others? Would some efforts potentially lay the groundwork for more costly or complex efforts later on?

7. Develop a proposed Sustainability Strategy for the commission. Provide time for commissioners, partners and other stakeholders to review, digest and comment on the proposal and for changes to be made. Identify milestones and metrics to keep an eye on progress and regular opportunities to discuss and, if needed, make adjustments to the plan.

8. Adopt, implement and monitor the plan. Regular updates and reviews will be critical see what actually happens and what changes may need to be made going forward.

Case Study: First 5 Contra Costa Sustainability Work

First 5 Contra Costa has undertaken a targeted sustainability effort focusing on ensuring the organization continues to have capacity to support the network of services and organizations it has historically supported. In order to achieve this, the organization will convene an Ad Hoc Committee of Commissioners, staff, and content experts including consultants, and other local system leaders to develop a 5-year plan with a goal of launching the planning and data collection efforts in early 2025.

An excellent discussion of the need for sustainability planning begins on page 15 of the current strategic plan, available [here](#). Specifically, the document notes:

"Since its inception, First 5 Contra Costa has strategically focused on building, sustaining, and/or growing the Commission's investments in early childhood systems — over \$140 million over the last two decades. Now, faced with the accelerated decline in Proposition 10 revenue prompted by the flavor ban, First 5 Contra Costa is taking a bold approach to redefine long-term sustainability. This new sustainability approach reframes the paradigm of the doomed revenue cliff that has overshadowed First 5's destiny since its inception.

"Instead, our new sustainability approach is based on the premise that a financially healthy First 5 Contra Costa is critical for the services and systems enhancements that our investments support. While the needs of young children prenatal to age 5 and their families will remain First 5 Contra Costa's priority, **ensuring the sustainability of our organization is imperative to achieve our targeted outcomes in the community.**"

Play 1.2: Support Grantees' Sustainability Planning

In addition to internal planning for your First 5 commission's sustainability, supporting those you fund to plan for ongoing sustainability will help ensure their services continue to be available to children and their families. Many local commissions mention grantee sustainability as part of their strategic plans. Formalizing these policies and adding focused efforts to monitor and reward planning and implementation of sustainability efforts can enhance relationships between First 5 commissions and their partners in the community.

Grantee Sustainability Planning: Key Considerations and Activities

The preparatory work for a sustainability effort aimed at commission grantees is similar to that listed above - getting support from the commission members, identifying a committee or other set of staff and partners to work on the project, understanding and using data, and setting clear goals are all crucial steps. In this case, gaining buy-in from the organizations funded by the commission is also critical.

1. Engage Grantees and Other Commissions. Provide information to your grantee partners about the funding challenges the commission is facing, and explain how a targeted sustainability effort can help to better leverage existing funding and identify new opportunities to bridge current and expected gaps. Consider inviting other commissions that have undertaken sustainability efforts to present on their lessons learned.

2. Develop a Project Timeline and Plan. Including an achievable timeline with opportunities for a cohort of grantees to build capacity together is important. Consider whether engaging outside consultants would be a good idea, and seek recommendations locally.

3. Set Aside or Otherwise Obtain Funding for the Effort. This may include identifying funding in your annual budget and/or seeking grant funding from potential community partners. Your staff, the staff of your grantee organizations, and potential consultant time all may cost more than you would typically have in your budget for this development work, but shortchanging the effort may result in it being less productive than it otherwise could be.

4. Kick off the Project and Begin Work! It's typically a great idea to gather participants together to mark the official start of a multi-month project. Making sure to level-set with the organizations and ensuring no one is surprised by any expectations you are setting can go a long way towards achieving success.

5. Monitor Progress and Celebrate Milestones. With planning should come consideration of how to measure success as well as how to mark progress along the way. Keep organizations engaged in the process by offering group learning activities as well as individual check-ins.

Case Study: First 5 Sacramento “Certified Sustainable”

First 5 Sacramento has evolved its sustainability work over the past decade to develop a Systems Optimization and Sustainability (SOS) Committee, formerly known as the Sustainability Committee. The committee has developed a Systems Improvement and Sustainability Plan to outline ways the commission can act to sustain its programs, services and outcomes in the face of declining Proposition 10 revenues.

The commission’s sustainability work began in 2015 with its Certified Sustainable effort, in which it partnered with two outside consultants to engage grantees in a process to develop sustainability plans, culminating with a public certification of those plans being deemed complete and achievable. After significant preparatory work, the team convened an all-grantee meeting in May 2018 to kick off the year-long effort.

In June 2019, a Certification Event was held to honor the 24 agencies that participated in the development of 20 certified plans, covering 23 programs funded through First 5 Sacramento. During the project, 90 agency staff participated in capacity-building workshops and events sponsored by Impact Foundry, and 150 hours of technical assistance and one-on-one coaching were provided by Storywalkers Consulting.

The work has continued in a number of ways. From 2020 through 2025, the First 5 Sacramento Commission is actively investing in 16 unique Systems Improvement & Sustainability Programs. Of these, 7 are 100% funded with leveraged resources, 3 are funded with a combination of First 5 Sacramento funding and leveraged resources, and 6 are 100% funded by First 5 Sacramento with the majority resourced by staff time.

The sustainability work at First 5 Sacramento is intertwined with the commission’s racial equity and social justice work, as well. The commission’s 2024-27 strategic plan recognizes the critical role that the commission can play in systems change and takes a bold step forward by centering Racial Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness (REDI+CR) in all aspects of the plan.

Grantee Sustainability Planning Resource Links

- **First 5 Sacramento County SOS Committee** - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/Dyadic-Services.aspx>
- **Certified Sustainable Final Report** - https://first5sacramento.saccounty.gov/Meetings/Documents/SOS/CertifiedSustainable_FinalReport%20wHighlights-MS.pdf

Play 2: Seek Alternative Revenue Streams

Both governmental and community-based organizations have long sought to diversify their sources of revenue to guard against cyclical downturns and potential generational shifts of priority and focus over time. Some revenue streams can be sustained, while others may be one-time in nature or available over a limited period of time. Demonstrating successful outcomes during that time frame could lead to ongoing funding, however, so even a one-time allocation may be worth pursuing if it can be parlayed into ongoing funding in a future budget year.

Play 2.1: Go for a Federal Funding Earmark

Some First 5 Commissions have been able to secure funding in the federal budget through an “earmark” initiative in partnership with their local congressional representative’s office. This entails a number of steps, including working with a federal lobbyist and/or developing a direct relationship with at least one congressional office in your service area, making a case for the specific funding request, and being able to document the need and how the funding would be used.

Federal Earmarks: How to Get Started

1. Understand the Process. If your county has a federal lobbyist, it can be helpful to start by connecting with them to discuss the timing, process, and potential success of a request. Follow any local procedures that are required to get permission to engage with the lobbyist and make sure your proposal is part of the federal priorities set forth by the county or other governing body. This step also includes:

- Conducting research to understand the earmark process, including eligibility criteria, timelines, and submission requirements. Review past earmarks to identify successful projects and trends.
- Familiarizing yourself with the appropriations process and relevant legislative committees. This includes understanding the committees your local representatives sit on and what their interests are, and how they align with your needs and ideas. Through this process, you can identify particular members of your delegation to target for support.

2. Identify and Define the Project. This is your opportunity to scope out the program or project you’re seeking funds for, including the objectives, costs, timelines and impact. Develop detailed documentation including budgets, potential pitfalls and likely benefits. Think about how the project aligns with federal priorities and the goals of any appropriations bill you may be considering targeting. Make sure to get early input and regular feedback from interested parties, including those your programs serve as well as those providing the services, to ensure you are hitting the mark on what is really needed and can make a compelling case.

3. Build Relationships. Reach out to organizations and individuals in your service area who will support your project, especially those who appear to have the ear of your local representatives. It's important to note that it can be too late to start this process only when you have something to ask for. Be on the lookout for opportunities to network with local government officials, CBOs and others who just seem to "get things done." Developing a network of contacts and maintaining those contacts with regular check-ins, invitations to coffee, site visits, or other methods is always a good idea – ideally, before you need to ask them for help.

4. Prepare a Compelling Proposal. This step includes development of:

- **Executive Summary:** Create a concise and compelling executive summary highlighting the project's importance and alignment with federal priorities. Legislators likely won't have time to read your entire proposal, so make this compelling and also short enough to skim.
- **Detailed Proposal:** Develop a thorough proposal, including project descriptions, budgets, timelines, expected outcomes, and any supporting data or research. This is a document primarily aimed at staff and others who will be digging into the details. Try to pre-emptively answer questions you think they may have.
- **Demonstrated Community Support:** Gather letters of support from local governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders to show widespread backing.

5. Submit the Request. On your own or with the help of your federal lobbyist, put forward the request to the congressional offices you are seeking assistance from. Make it clear you are not only seeking their support but want them to actively "champion" this issue on your behalf and explain why you think they are the best champion for your proposal. Make sure you are meeting any deadlines they have set and covering all bases in terms of the details and information required.

6. Advocate and Monitor the Process. Set reminders to follow up with these offices regularly to ensure the request is understood and remains in contention for inclusion in the lawmaker's requests for that particular appropriations bill or budget cycle. This could be done through in-person or virtual meetings, phone calls, emails and other communication methods. Also be sure to monitor the appropriations process to track the status of your request, as well as any relevant legislative developments.

During this phase, you may want to consider:

- **Engaging with the media** to raise awareness and generate public support. This should be done with the knowledge of your congressional representative's office and communications staff.
- **Making a trip to Washington, DC** or piggybacking on another trip, such as a national conference or other event, that allows you to visit the lawmaker's office in person and meet with key staff to the appropriate committees in the House and Senate to discuss the proposal. Again, this can be done in coordination with your champion's office and ideally your federal lobbyist.

7. Post-Success Activities. Once the funding is included in the appropriations package, it's important to continue working closely with your champion's office to ensure ongoing support. Key activities include:

- Publicly acknowledging the support of legislators and the federal government if the earmark is awarded.
- Implementing the project as planned and ensuring compliance with any reporting requirements.
- Providing regular updates to stakeholders, including lawmakers, on the progress and impact of the funded project.

Play 2.2: Seek a State Budget Member Request

Similar to seeking federal funding for your projects, the California Legislature also considers member-sponsored funding requests during most budget cycles. These are also sometimes called "district requests." The process is similar to seeking a federal earmark, but does have some notable differences.

- California has a **more clearly delineated budget cycle** than the federal government. The California Constitution requires legislators to pass a balanced budget by June 15 of each calendar year, or lose pay for every day the budget is late. The process begins early each year, with the Governor putting forth a budget proposal by January 10, and a second version of this budget by May 15, known as the May Revision, which includes updated caseload, spending and revenue assumptions.
- The Senate and Assembly have **different processes** for considering requests that will benefit members' home districts, and those processes can change each year. If you have a state lobbyist, they can guide you in the process details and help put forth your request at the proper time and in the proper format. Whether you have help from a lobbyist or are doing it all yourself, **reaching out to your local members' district offices** to request information early in the year and get your project on their radar is a good place to start.
- Plan for at least one trip to Sacramento to meet with the appropriate staff to the Senate and Assembly budget committees as well as staff to the chairs and members of both committees. While online meetings are also an option, in-person meetings are also very helpful if you can manage them.
- Note that it will be extremely difficult at either the state or federal level to secure funds for your organization's routine operations. Having a **proposed project or new program** that these funds will be used for, being able to explain **exactly how much funding is needed** and what the state's contribution will be used to purchase, as well as knowing what the **outcomes and benefits** will be for the member's district, is very important. Data and details are critical.

Case Study: Vallejo Early Learning Center

First 5 Solano County is spearheading the redevelopment of a surplus school site in Vallejo into an Early Learning Center, which will bring together multiple service providers in a first-of-its-kind project located in a community with significant service needs.

The project grew out of the need to find a new location for a local Head Start program, resulting in the identification of a shuttered elementary school no longer in use by the Vallejo City Unified School District as a potential location. First 5 Solano County will purchase and rehabilitate the site with support from a number of funders. The Early Learning Center will not only house Head Start programming but also provide a safe and up-to-date location for multiple child care providers to operate, providing much-needed child care for working parents.

Multiple funding sources are being brought to bear for the project, including a successful campaign to secure a federal funding earmark of 500,000 through the office of Congressman John Garamendi as well as receipt of a 1 million grant from the Syar Foundation to renovate and outfit a multipurpose room as part of the project. The grant was requested by Solano County Supervisor Erin Hannigan.

The half-million-dollar federal earmark and million-dollar foundation donation were key parts of an overall 16 million fundraising effort, which also included 5 million in state funds secured by Senator Bill Dodd; local funds through the Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Solano County Office of Education, the Vallejo City Council, First 5 Commission and Child Start, Inc. The project has raised the funds needed to complete the Vallejo Early Learning Center and is now fundraising to build a new 4 million community resource center on the property.

Vallejo Early Learning Center Resource Links

- Rep. Garamendi Member Request - <https://garamendi.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/garamendi.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/fy24-member-certification-for-solano-early-learning-center.pdf>
- County Receives 1 million Foundation Grant for Early Learning Center - <https://www.solanocounty.com/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=2536&TargetID=1>
- Senator Bill Dodd secures 5M budget allocation for Early Learning Center in Vallejo - <https://solanocounty.com/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=2442&TargetID=1>

Play 2.3: Support a Local District Tax Measure

In California, local governments, such as cities and counties, can place “transaction and use tax” measures on the ballot for voter consideration. These measures, collectively referred to as District Taxes and sometimes more generally called “sales taxes,” are subject to specific rules and requirements in state law and regulations regarding authorization, vote thresholds, collection and use.

Authorization and Approval:

- A District Tax Measure must be authorized by the governing body of the local government, such as a city council or county Board of Supervisors, in order to be placed before the voters.

Types of District Tax Measures:

- **General Purpose Tax:** The proceeds can be used for any purpose. This type of tax requires a 2/3 vote of the Board of Supervisors to put on the ballot, and requires a simple majority (50% + 1) voter approval.
- **Specific Purpose Tax:** The proceeds are earmarked for specific purposes, such as transportation projects, public safety, child care, health care, or education. This type requires a two-thirds vote of the Board of Supervisors to be placed onto the ballot and also requires a two-thirds majority (66.7%) for voter approval. However, California courts have found that specific purpose tax measures that originate via a citizens initiative process require only a majority of voters to approve, not two-thirds, as they are not considered to be proposals from the government (see for example, *Cnty of Alameda v Alameda Cnty Taxpayers’ Assn* (317 Cal. Rptr. 3d 690 (Cal. Ct. App. 2024))).

Usage of Proceeds:

- The proceeds from a general purpose tax can be used for a wide range of municipal purposes, including public safety, infrastructure, parks and recreation, libraries, and other general governmental functions.
- The proceeds from a special purpose tax must be used only for the specific purposes outlined in the measure and in accordance with any rules and processes set forth in the authorizing measure’s language.

Voter Approval Process:

- Once the local government approves placing a measure on the ballot, it is presented to voters during an election, which can be a regular election or a special election.
- The measure must receive the required level of voter support (simple majority for general taxes, two-thirds for special taxes) to be enacted.
- Upon approval, the tax is administered through the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, which charges the local government fees to cover its costs and passes the remainder through on a monthly basis, with quarterly true-ups based on actual collections.

Sales Tax (District Tax) Measures: How to Get Started

There are a number of planning steps that need to be followed, and some important threshold questions that should be considered, to place a sales tax measure before local voters.

Threshold Questions

- Will this measure be put forth by a local community group or coalition or groups via an initiative petition, or will the effort be led by one or more members of the County Board of Supervisors? If the former, what are the county's rules and timelines regarding submission of petitions?
- What level of tax rate will be levied through this measure? For how many years?
- What will be the allowable uses of the funds?
- What entity or entities should govern the funding and be responsible for the development of plans and procedures for its use? In the case of Measure C, First 5 Alameda County is specifically named as the implementing agency.
- What role should citizens or other affected entities and organizations play in developing priorities and providing input into planning processes?
- What should be the requirements for reporting on the use of funds and the outcomes of funding that is provided?

Necessary Steps

1. Develop coalition or begin process of putting forth transaction and use tax proposal via county method, depending on how the measure will be put forth. Establish roadmap and key timelines. Consider best election to target (i.e., should you target a primary ballot or November ballot? Presidential or non-Presidential election year?)
2. Identify and retain an attorney with knowledge of ballot measures, transaction and use tax law and requirements, and related processes to help review and manage the process.
3. Write proposed ballot initiative and vet details with key stakeholders (within coalition, if that's the chosen route, or with other partners if it is to be county-led).
4. Finalize ballot measure language. Follow all necessary requirements to gain approval for measure to be placed on ballot. This may include retention of a signature-gathering contractor, if an initiative is the chosen route.
5. Develop public relations campaign for ballot measure; fundraise as needed for media buys, mailers, advertising and other methods.

Resources: State Laws and Guidance

- The California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) has a comprehensive guide for localities seeking to place a sales tax measure on the ballot. This guide can be found at: <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/industry/local-jurisdictions-and-districts/>
- California law governing the special purpose tax can be found in the Revenue and Taxation Code, Division 2, Part 1.7, Chapter 2, at: <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/lawguides/vol1/alt/additional-local-taxes-ch2.html>

Case Study: Alameda County Measure C

One example of a recently enacted special district tax measure that is being administered by a First 5 commission is Measure C in Alameda County. This 0.5% transaction and use tax measure was put forth by citizen initiative, passed by 64 percent of county voters in 2020, and was upheld by the California Supreme Court in 2024 following legal challenges from multiple organizations. Parent Voices Oakland was the lead entity in shepherding the measure through the initiative process and as a citizen initiative, the measure required a majority vote to pass.

"We wanted to administer Measure C because it's a crucial investment in our County's children and families. Our providers will benefit, as well, in terms of infrastructure improvements, staff development, and higher wages. Having First 5 Alameda County administer this gives the local public system the opportunity to utilize our administrative flexibility, in addition to our programmatic expertise, as an independent governmental entity. The additional resources will allow First 5 to leverage the existing investments in neighborhoods and early childhood; stabilize our data, finance, and policy infrastructure; and scale Early Care and Education programming -- operationalizing a whole community, whole family, whole child approach."

*-- Kristin Spanos, Executive Director
First 5 Alameda County*

The funds are designated for expanding access to high-quality early learning programs, improving child-centered spaces like parks and libraries, enhancing child care access, supporting training for early educators, and funding pediatric health care. The measure is expected to generate around 150 million annually.

Of the total funds collected, 20 percent is earmarked for pediatric health care and the remaining 80 percent is earmarked for early childhood education (ECE).

First 5 Alameda County is the legally designated entity administering the ECE portion of the funding. Currently, First 5 Alameda County is developing data analyses, collecting input from ECE providers in the county via a survey, establishing a Community Advocacy Council with diverse voices to inform implementation of the measure, and developing necessary outreach and informational materials.

Alameda County Measure C Resource Links

- Measure C Text: https://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_12_05_19/GENERAL%20ADMINISTRATION/Regular%20Calendar/ROV_288363.pdf
- Appellate case opinion: <https://casetext.com/case/cnty-of-alameda-v-alameda-cnty-taxpayers-assn>
- Alameda County Guide to Filing Initiative Petition: https://www.acvote.org/acvote-assets/04_resources/PDFs/Guide-FilingInitiatives-v3.pdf
- Parent Voices Oakland Measure C Archives: <https://pvoakland.org/tag/measure-c/>

Play 3: Seize New Service Opportunities

Being aware of new opportunities to either refinance existing services or shift services to fit funding availability is critical to developing a sustainable organization. Recent changes in long-standing programs such as Medicaid (known as Medi-Cal in California) the Child Welfare Services system and the Behavioral Health services area present potential opportunities to leverage funding. In each case, these opportunities come with new organizational and operational requirements that will need thoughtful planning and execution to successfully implement.

Play 3.1: Access Medicaid Funding via CalAIM

The CalAIM waiver is a multi-year, comprehensive waiver that the California Department of Health Care Services has negotiated with the federal government. A number of provisions in the waiver open up potential service delivery opportunities, and concomitant funding opportunities, for local First 5 commissions.

In addition to the potential for new services and system supports, First 5 commissions are also a required partner for MCPs in the implementation of CalAIM. Specifically, every Medi-Cal MCP is required to enter into MOUs with the First 5 commission or commissions within their service area. This is not a requirement to contract, per se, but offers an opportunity for First 5 commissions to share the work they do, explain how their services can fit with the requirements of CalAIM, and (if interested) potentially seek a contractual relationship.

It can be daunting to navigate the process of contracting with a MCP, especially for an organization that has not previously done so. Additionally, there are historic challenges related to providing the types of services envisioned by CalAIM to children and youth enrolled in Medi-Cal. However, there are materials and tools available that can support the communication and contracting process. In particular, local Collaborative Planning and Implementation (PATH-CPI) groups exist in most counties that, if your First 5 is not already included, should be seen as a resource and place to learn and make connections. Information about local PATH-CPI groups is available at the link below. Participation in these facilitated groups is available at no cost; registration may be required.

Specific Areas for Exploration

1. Community Health Worker Benefit: Help Me Grow Programs

The Help Me Grow program is based on a national model and is administered in 29 counties. In 28 of the 29 counties, the administering agency is the county First 5 commission (the exception is Fresno County where the Fresno Superintendent of Schools is the primary administrator).

The program offers a number of family-centered services that appear to fit well with the PATH model, especially system navigation support for families whose children are at risk of or have identified health and/or developmental needs delivered by individuals who qualify as Community Health Workers, a newly covered service provider under the Medi-Cal program. Most children in California receiving Medi-Cal will likely qualify for this benefit.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Benefit: Staff in the Help Me Grow program could potentially be considered Community Health Workers, which include individuals known by a variety of job titles, including promotores, community health representatives, navigators, and other non-licensed public health workers, including violence prevention professionals, who meet qualifications set forth by DHCS and the Health Care, specifically:

1. Demonstrate minimum qualifications via 1) a certificate of completion or 2) work experience (2,000 hours);
2. Have lived experience that aligns with and provides a connection between the CHW and the community or population being served; and,
3. Be supervised by a licensed provider, clinic, hospital, CBO, or Local Health Jurisdiction who is enrolled in the Medi-Cal program.

As noted above, a CHW must be connected to a “supervising provider” – an enrolled Medi-Cal provider who submits claims for services provided by CHWs. The supervising provider ensures a CHW meets the qualifications and directly or indirectly oversees the CHW. The supervising provider can be a licensed provider, a hospital, an outpatient clinic, a local health jurisdiction (LHJ), or a community-based organization (CBO) – including a First 5 Commission. Importantly, CHWs may be supervised by a CBO or LHJ that does not have a licensed provider on staff.

CHW services are considered medically necessary for beneficiaries with one or more chronic health conditions (including behavioral health) or exposure to violence and trauma, who are at risk for a chronic health condition or environmental health exposure, who face barriers meeting their health or health-related social needs, and/or who would benefit from preventive services.

These services require a written recommendation by a physician or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts within their scope of practice under state law. The recommending licensed provider does not need to be enrolled in Medi-Cal or be a network provider within the beneficiary’s managed care plan.

2. Enhanced Care Management: Home Visiting Programs

Many First 5 commissions offer home visiting as part of their services. Under the CalAIM waiver, home visiting services can be reimbursed as Enhanced Care Management (ECM) benefits provided to targeted Medi-Cal recipients. To the extent that a commission already receives funding for some of its home visiting services from one or more other sources, such as the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program, care would need to be taken to avoid duplication of funding.

Commissions that do not already draw funds from outside programs for home visiting could potentially do so in partnership with their managed care plans, and those with existing contracts with other county agencies could supplement those contracts to potentially serve more families and children using ECM.

The ECM home visiting benefit is available to adults and youth who (1) Are pregnant or are postpartum through 12 months, and (2) Are subject to racial and ethnic disparities as defined by California public health data on maternal morbidity and mortality.

There are no limitations on who may be an ECM provider for this population of focus. Additionally, the ECM Provider Manual (linked below) notes that an individual who may be already receiving home visiting services could receive additional services if needed through the ECM benefit in accordance with provisions in the manual. The provider manual also notes that ECM providers do not have to have previous experience serving Medi-Cal MCP members in order to be considered a good potential partner. DHCS expects MCPs to work in close collaboration with, and prioritize contracting with, counties, including specifically noting counties in their role as payers and providers of services to children.

3. CHW and/or ECM: Family Resource Centers

Many First 5 Commissions operate Family Resource Centers (FRCs) that connect children and their families with important resources in the community, conducting or supporting screenings and other activities that could fit within the Community Health Worker benefit or be considered for inclusion in Enhanced Case Management services. In addition to the Home Visiting benefit mentioned above, other services are available to children and youth through ECM if they fall within a Population of Focus for ECM benefits, as listed in the below table.

ECM Children and Youth Populations of Focus
Children (up to age 21) experiencing homelessness.
Children who are considered high utilizers of care, including children or youth who are frequently hospitalized and those who regularly use emergency rooms as a source of care.
Children with significant behavioral health needs, such as those with serious emotional disturbance, identified to be at clinical high risk for psychosis, or experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
Children enrolled in California Children’s Services (CCS) or the CCS Whole Child Model who have additional needs beyond the CCS qualifying condition.
Children involved in (or with a history of involvement in) child welfare, including foster care up to age 26.
Children transitioning from incarceration.

CalAIM Service Opportunities: How to Get Started

1. MCP Research: Identify the MCP or MCPs in your county if you are not already familiar with the plans. Review their websites and program materials to see what services they offer and how they are approaching CalAIM. Each plan is required to publicly post details about its Medi-Cal network of providers on its website, and that network listing must now include providers of Enhanced Care Management services. This will allow you to see what types of CBOs they contract with and consider how your services may fit within their areas of need.

2. CalAIM Review: Review materials from DHCS (links below) to familiarize yourself with the potential benefits available through CalAIM and how they fit with services that your First 5 commission provides, brokers, or may be interested in providing. For example, you might not be operating a Help Me Grow program but could identify other opportunities within your agency or within a partner organization for CHW or ECM services.

3. MOU Preparation Work: When the template MOU is released (comments on the draft were due July 8-10), review the details with your team and consider how you would like to engage the MCP in developing the local MOU. As mentioned, the MOU is not a contract but opens the door for discussion of partnership and potential contracting opportunities.

4. MCP Relationship Work: Begin to build a relationship, or strengthen existing relationships, with your MCPs. Consider inviting MCP officials to a site visit with your team so they can see the types of services you provide. Use this as an opportunity to focus on areas that you could support the provision of services to MCP members, such as home visiting, system navigation, behavioral health, developmental screenings, and so forth.

5. Free Help Available: Connect with your local PATH CPI group (see directory linked below) to begin attending meetings and talk with the consultant facilitating your group to understand what has already been discussed and get their thoughts about the role your First 5 commission could play – both in the group, as well as the broader effort in your community. DHCS also operates a Technical Assistance marketplace where providers may be available to help you develop a roadmap for providing CHW or ECM services at no cost to you.

6. Join the First 5 Center Medi-Cal Transformation Learning Community: As linked below, the First 5 Center for Children's Policy has established a Learning Community for First 5 Commissions to support the development of local and regional partnerships with managed care plans and provides guidance on the organizational structures necessary to be a contracted partner with plans. The Medi-Cal Learning Community meets monthly and offers 1:1 technical assistance for participants with either First 5 Center staff or consultants.

7. Medi-Cal Billing Support: The documentation of services and billing for reimbursement are two of the most complicated and time-consuming aspects of becoming a Medi-Cal provider. It is

a good idea to consider whether your First 5 wants to handle that on your own or work with a billing partner to handle this aspect. Talking with other First 5 commissions that may be exploring how best to handle billing for their local health plan, including through the Learning Community mentioned above, may also be helpful here, especially those working with the same managed care plan as the one in your county.

CalAIM Resource Links

- DHCS Managed Care Plan CalAIM MOU Information - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/MCPMOUS.aspx>
- DHCS YouTube Recording of July 2, 2024 Draft First 5 MOU Webinar - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFVqgXpECEA>
- Community Health Worker Provider Manual: https://mcweb.apps.prd.cammis.medi-cal.ca.gov/assets/03BBA223-8762-4A94-A268-209510E15E37/chwprev.pdf?access_token=6UyVkRRfByXTZEWlh8j8QaYlPyP5ULO
- CalAIM Enhanced Care Management Policy Guide - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/ECM-Policy-Guide.pdf>
- ECM Provider Toolkit - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM/ECM/Documents/ECM-Provider-Toolkit.pdf>
- Collaborative Planning and Implementation Directory - <https://www.ca-path.com/collaborative/collaborative-group-directory>
- PATH Technical Assistance Marketplace - <https://www.ca-path.com/ta-marketplace>
- First 5 Center for Children's Policy Blog on CHW Opportunities for First 5 - <https://first5center.org/blog/community-health-worker-medi-cal-benefit-implementation-and-the-role-of-community-partners-like-first-5>
- First 5 Center for Children's Policy Blog on Learning Community: <https://first5center.org/blog/the-first-5-medi-cal-learning-community-first-5s-partner-with-managed-care-plans-on-medi-cal-transformation>

Counties with a Help Me Grow Program

Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, Fresno, Inland Empire (Riverside & San Bernardino), Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Mendocino, Orange, Plumas, Sacramento, San Benito, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Ventura, Yolo, Yuba

Play 3.2: Engage With Child Welfare Rate Reform

The child welfare system is undergoing significant changes in how it approaches families and children who may be struggling. The system at all levels is placing a larger emphasis on equitable approaches to family and child well-being, connecting families with culturally responsive services, and strengthening families and communities in lieu of removing children from their biological parents and placing them into foster care under court order.

The Legislature this year approved an Administration-driven overhaul of the services available to families and children and the means by which those services are accessed, to be called the Tiered Rate Structure. Importantly, the new rate system will shift funding away from being tied to the type of placement a child is in, and instead is connected to the assessed needs of the child. The new structure is statutorily required to take effect on July 1, 2027 at the earliest.

The rate system includes two key areas where First 5 commissions could play a potentially major local role. Specifically, First 5 commissions should be prepared to support the implementation of **Strengths-Building Activities** and/or **Immediate Need Services** for Children Aged 0-5 and their Families.

- **Strengths Building Activities:** The child and their family will work with a spending plan manager to develop a plan for purchasing goods and services in the community, which could include family-based enrichment activities, parenting classes, and other culturally responsive, family centered and permanency focused goods, services, activities, and/or supports. The family will receive a monthly amount of funding to use towards these activities, based on the child's level of need as assessed by the county using the IP-CANS tool, which is the statewide assessment tool used by child welfare services agencies. These assessments and the subsequent rates to be paid are age-based and include specified rates for children aged 0-5, consistent with the focus of First 5 commissions.
- **Immediate Need Services:** County child welfare agencies will receive an allocation to contract for or otherwise arrange services to meet the immediate needs of children, including children aged 0-5 whose IP-CANS assessments find that they are in a tier in which immediate needs are identified. The goal is to develop a coordinated, timely, and trauma-informed system of care that builds partnerships between caregivers, community-based service providers, and county and tribal placing agencies. Again, services targeted to children aged 0-5 are needed in this component, as well.

The First 5 system has been providing and/or brokering services to meet the needs of children aged 0-5 for 25 years and should be a critical partner both at the state level and at the table locally to help determine the best way to bring together service providers to serve children aged 0-5 and their families who are engaged in the types of "strengths building" and "immediate needs" activities that will be funded through the new rate structure.

For example, First 5 agencies could dedicate staff and/or identify contractors to provide or arrange these services, possibly located at sites such as Family Resource Centers and Help Me Grow programs, depending on the local First 5's service array. A First 5 may also be able to serve as a spending plan manager for families engaged in strengths building activities, though it is unclear how the state will approach the contracting of these services (i.e., whether it will concentrate the work with fewer agencies or have more, locally based providers).

The California Department of Social Services will be developing guidance, materials, and training for all of these aspects of the rate reform changes over the coming two years. Ensuring that First 5 commissions have a seat at the table and an opportunity to provide input to these state-level conversations is important, as is developing or strengthening local relationships that will be needed in order to play a role in implementing these changes.

Child Welfare Rate Reform: How to Get Started

1. Understand the Tiered Rate Structure. Understanding the child welfare system, how rates are structured today, and how they are changing through participating in training, webinars and other research will be important to help plan efforts around local engagement. Resource links are at the end of this section to help start that process.

2. Engage with County Child Welfare Services. As the county child welfare agency will be receiving an allocation for Immediate Needs services, ensuring you are talking regularly with your counterparts at CWS and explaining the value of partnering with First 5, so that you can regularly engage in their planning efforts, will be critical. First 5 in particular can play a connective role in identifying services and supports for families with children aged 0-5.

3. Develop Data and Research on Community Needs. Many First 5 commissions make use of geographic data to pinpoint the communities of greatest need, and locate their services in those communities to the extent possible or otherwise direct activities towards those areas. If you do not already have data analysis capacity, developing those skills in your staff is an important step. Connecting your existing data with data from the child welfare system, if you have not already done so, will also be important to understand where demand may be greatest for the kinds of services that will be supported by the new rate structure.

4. Provide Input to California Department of Social Services. The department will be the lead entity on developing guidance and rulemaking, as well as soliciting input from stakeholders. Ensuring that First 5 commissions have a seat at the table and volunteering your time to be a part of those meetings and discussions is a great way to provide input, develop relationships, and gain insights into opportunities.

5. Partner Locally to Identify and Develop Programs and Services to Strengthen Families.

This could include:

- Starting new services or bringing programs and services to local family resource centers or other sites. For children aged 0-5, activities that strengthen bonds with their parents, improve socialization with other children, focus on early development needs, and similar activities are all potential options.
- Applying to serve as a spending plan manager, assuming the state structure provides the opportunity.
- Identifying and planning for staffing increases and/or contracting for services.

Tiered Child Welfare Rate Structure: Resource Links

- California Department of Social Services: The Permanent Foster Care Rate Structure Page - <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/foster-care/foster-care-audits-and-rates/foster-care-rate-reform-proposal>
- AB 161: Trailer Bill Language on Tiered Rate Structure - https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB161
- PowerPoint presentation by Angie Schwartz, Deputy Director, Children and Family Services Division, CDSS, to the Child Welfare Policy Roundtable (April 5, 2024) - <https://www.childrennow.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/a.-dss-foster-care-rate-reform-proposal-2024.04.05-ppt.pdf>
- California Child Welfare Council – Mandated Reporting to Community Supporting Task Force Recommendations (June 5, 2024) - https://www.caltrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/MRCS-TF-Recommendations_June_2024_CWC_Final-.pdf

Play 3.3: Expand Child Welfare Prevention Services

Significant efforts are underway across multiple child-serving systems in California to focus more resources on strengthening families and communities to help avoid foster care system engagement. Strengthening child and family well-being through multiple primary, secondary, and tertiary initiatives is a goal of the state's federally approved Family First Prevention Services Act Five-Year State Prevention Plan. Enabling legislation, AB 153 (Chapter 86, Statutes of 2021) encouraged counties to take a holistic view of child maltreatment prevention including early intervention and upstream, community-based services as well as services and supports for families with identified risks.

As part of the state's investment in prevention work, counties (including child welfare agencies and/or probation departments) and tribes wishing to receive state block grant funding for prevention were required to develop and submit a three-year, comprehensive prevention plan to CDSS by January 31, 2023. While many First 5 commissions are already engaged locally with their child welfare systems, not all were at the table during the development of these plans. Of the 51 county plans approved as of this writing, all but two expressly mentioned First 5 as a partner and potential/planned prevention service provider.

Potential areas in which services that First 5 commissions directly provide, or fund, could play a role in the comprehensive prevention plan implementation include:

- Home Visiting/Evidence Based Family Strengthening Programs
- Help Me Grow Outreach and Expansion
- Training for caregivers, county staff and community-based organizations
- Care navigation through Family Resource Centers

These services may be created or expanded using funds available through the federal government, state augmentations, or selected local funds listed in the "Comprehensive Prevention Funding Guide" and "California Prevention Services Funding Chart." Note that counties are not yet able to claim federal Title IV-E funding made available under the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) due to a lack of automation. This lag time provides an opportunity for local planning and capacity building to begin services upon availability of federal funds. Importantly, several services provided by, or funded through, First 5 commissions are potentially eligible for federal Title IV-E funding.

Child Welfare Prevention – How to Get Started

As most local First 5 commissions have been involved in some way in the initial development of their local county Comprehensive Prevention Plans, ensuring that the plans are implemented, and continue to evolve, in a way that includes First 5 engagement is critical. Some ideas for this include:

1. Attend local CPP governance meetings regularly and engage in service planning. Think about how other opportunities in this playbook might connect with the prevention plan and related funding, and how transition and planning funds that counties have received might be used to help First 5 develop capacity to grow existing services such as home visiting, family resource centers, care navigation, and other program offerings. Counties must spend their transition funds within a prescribed timeline or risk losing those funds, so ensuring that First 5 is part of the planning for these funds is important.

2. Develop local data sharing agreements and prevention metrics to ensure tracking of services across systems. While the county plans for prevention services to be provided using federal funds, agencies that may be engaged in that work should be working together to ensure that processes are in place to develop and monitor service plans, delivery of services, outcomes and spending for individual children and families as required under the federal FFPSA. Being able to hit the ground running once federal Title IV-E can be accessed is important. If data sharing agreement exist for other purposes, review those agreements to determine if changes or expansions are needed in order to implement FFPSA-funded activities.

3. Review local intake and family engagement processes with contractors and staff, and include community organizations and parents receiving services in the development of materials. Providing more services to families in collaboration with county child welfare offices could raise questions and concerns for families accepting those services. Ensuring that the receipt of prevention services is not confused with formal engagement in the child welfare system is important to developing and preserving trust, especially in communities that have historically been disproportionately represented in child welfare and foster care.

Child Welfare Prevention Spending: Resource Links

- CDSS Child Welfare Prevention Homepage: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/ffpsa-part-iv/californias-vision-for-prevention>
- AB 153 - Child Welfare Trailer Bill Creating Child Welfare Prevention Program Structure: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB153
- Federally Approved California State Five-Year Prevention Plan: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/ffpsa-part-iv/californias-five-year-state-prevention-plan>
- California Prevention Services Funding Chart: <https://bit.ly/3TZkuL0>
- Comprehensive Prevention Funding Guide: <https://bit.ly/3zVRSvm>

Play 3.4: Embrace Enhanced First 5 Role in Supporting Behavioral Health Services for Children and Families

Driven by the pandemic and recognition of a behavioral health crisis among the nation's children and youth, as well as a deeper understanding of the lasting impact of childhood trauma and adverse experiences, California has seen a renewed energy for investments in promising behavioral health interventions for children, including young children and their parents. These efforts have resulted in recent state-level attention and investments in this area, such as:

- The **Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative** (CYBHI) is the collective name for a series of investments over multiple years and across multiple child-serving systems. The CYBHI was established in the Budget Act of 2021. The CYBHI follows a 5-year timeline, with investments totaling \$4.6 billion. The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has awarded grants in five of six planned rounds of funding; those receiving grants are participating in data collection and reporting to show the benefits of the services provided. Several local First 5 commissions have received funding through the grant process.
- In March 2024, California voters approved **Proposition 1**, making major changes to the Mental Health Services Act, including refocusing the act on greater services to those at risk of homelessness, as well as adding substance use disorder treatment services to the original mental health focus of the Act, renaming it the **Behavioral Health Services Act**. The newly rewritten Act requires that 35 percent of county funds be used for behavioral health services and supports, with a minimum of 51 percent of these dollars (i.e., at least 17.85% of the county's BHSA funds) being directed towards early intervention supports for Californians who are 25 years and under.

A number of First 5 commissions have been participating in the CYBHI, including receipt of services-focused grant funding from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to implement specific evidence-based practices for children, youth and their families.

This includes a number of First 5 commissions receiving funds in Round 1 of the grants, spread across three evidence based programs: Positive Parenting Program (Triple-P), Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, and HealthySteps. Importantly, all three of these programs, as well as some others, are reimbursable by Medi-Cal under a relatively new **dyadic benefit** implemented in January 2023 as part of the initiative. A dyadic program is one that includes behavioral health services for both children and their parents or caregivers (a.k.a, a "dyad"), with a goal of creating supportive family environments and helping children reach their potential.

In addition to very broad eligibility standards for the dyadic benefit, there are no service location limitations. Services may be provided through telehealth or in-person and at a variety of sites including schools and community settings, in addition to doctor's offices and other clinical locations. Clinics may be eligible to draw down Fee For Services payments for these services.

First 5 commissions that already support programs offering dyadic services may seek to fund and potentially expand those services through agreements with their county mental health plans (MHPs), Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs), and/or local clinics (or clinic networks).

Program Offered	First 5 Commissions Receiving Grants
<p>Positive Parenting Program https://www.triplep.net/glo-en/find-out-about-triple-p/triple-p-in-a-nutshell/</p>	<p>Butte, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Mendocino, Santa Cruz, Tehama</p>
<p>Parent Child Interaction Therapy https://www.pcit.org/what-is-pcit.html</p>	<p>San Benito</p>
<p>HealthySteps https://www.healthysteps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/E_HS-Exploration-Guide.pdf</p>	<p>Santa Clara, Ventura</p>

Additionally, home visiting programs, as noted above, are another way to provide wellness support for parents and caregivers as well as conduct screenings and support early intervention with babies and young children.

Behavioral Health Supports: How to Get Started

1. Connect with Peer First 5 Agencies – Learning from those on the list of grantees for the programs that are reimbursable under Medi-Cal is an important first step, as it will help you understand more about the programs and how these agencies are partnering with MCPs, MHPs or other providers. Part of the grant project was to ensure sustainability of these programs beyond the grant funding, so understanding the development of future funding plans by these participants would be very helpful to planning for similar activities in your locality.

2. Discuss Potential Partnerships with MCPs and local clinics – As part of the MOU process, your MCP may be interested in discussing a variety of services, as noted earlier; screening for potential eligibility for benefits, providing care coordination, supporting dyadic benefit provision, and making referrals could fall within the scope of a First 5. In addition, providing an accessible, community-based location for the delivery of certain covered services by clinical staff is an option that could support First 5 operations. Similar conversations could be had with the Federally Qualified Health Clinics, Tribal Clinics and/or Rural Health Clinics in your county or service area.

3. Meet with MHP to discuss Potential Services Under Proposition 1 – As noted above, county mental health plans are required to utilize a minimum of 17.85 percent of their funding for the Behavioral Health Services Act for early intervention supports for Californians aged 25 and younger. However, it is very early in the planning for these efforts, and how the entire system will make the shift from the previous breakdown of fund usage and various requirements under the MHSA to the new BHSA requirements is still unclear.

4. Expect Uncertainty - Many counties and existing providers are concerned about potential cuts to services for this age group rather than potential increases as a result of Proposition 1. However, the First 5 system offers a ready-made connection to very young children and their families and can be an important partner to MHPs in identifying needs, making referrals, either operating or funding home visiting programs and other related services, and more generally supporting service delivery efforts. Having a meeting with your MHP to discuss their approach to implementing Proposition 1 and what opportunities that a connection with First 5 programs may provide is an important first step in navigating the new behavioral health landscape.

Behavioral Health Resource Links

- DHCS Dyadic Benefit Implementation – Main Page - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/provgovpart/Pages/Dyadic-Services.aspx>
- DHCS Dyadic Benefit Implementation – All-Plan Letter 22-029 - <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/MMCDAPLsandPolicyLetters/APL2022/APL22-029.pdf>
- Proposition 1 Overview by California Budget Center - <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/qa-understanding-california-prop-1/#:~:text=California%20voters%20will%20decide%20on,the%20Mental%20Health%20Services%20Act.>

Summary and Next Steps

This Playbook has sought to provide new ideas, updates on recent changes in the programs and agencies that First 5 commissions often partner with and a roadmap for implementing these ideas if your First 5 commission is interested in doing so. This is intended to be a living document and additional plays, case studies and resource links may be added from time to time.

While by no means comprehensive, the Playbook shows how some promising practices can be put to work to expand opportunities for First 5 funding, services and cross-system collaboration. These practices include:

- Developing relationships across state and local partner agencies with an eye towards demonstrating how the First 5 network can support meaningful change in service delivery for children and their families in a variety of settings and programs.
- Stepping outside traditional roles to seek funding for the types of services that First 5 commissions have long provided to help strengthen and support children aged 0-5.
- Harnessing opportunities to build capacity within First 5 agencies to utilize data, track metrics, support partnerships and planning, and serve a connective role within communities when it comes to serving children and families.

We hope you continue to do great things for the youngest children of California!

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are in order to numerous colleagues who served as guides to the First 5 system as well as thought partners on how First 5 commissions can thrive even in the face of a primary revenue source that continues to decline. A non-exhaustive list is below - apologies for any omissions.

First 5 California

First 5 Association of California & First 5 Center for Children's Policy

Child and Family Policy Institute of California

California Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Department of Health Care Services

California Department of Social Services

Transform Health

Alameda Health Consortium and Community Health Center Network

Representatives from the First 5 Commissions of Alameda, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, Solano and Yolo Counties